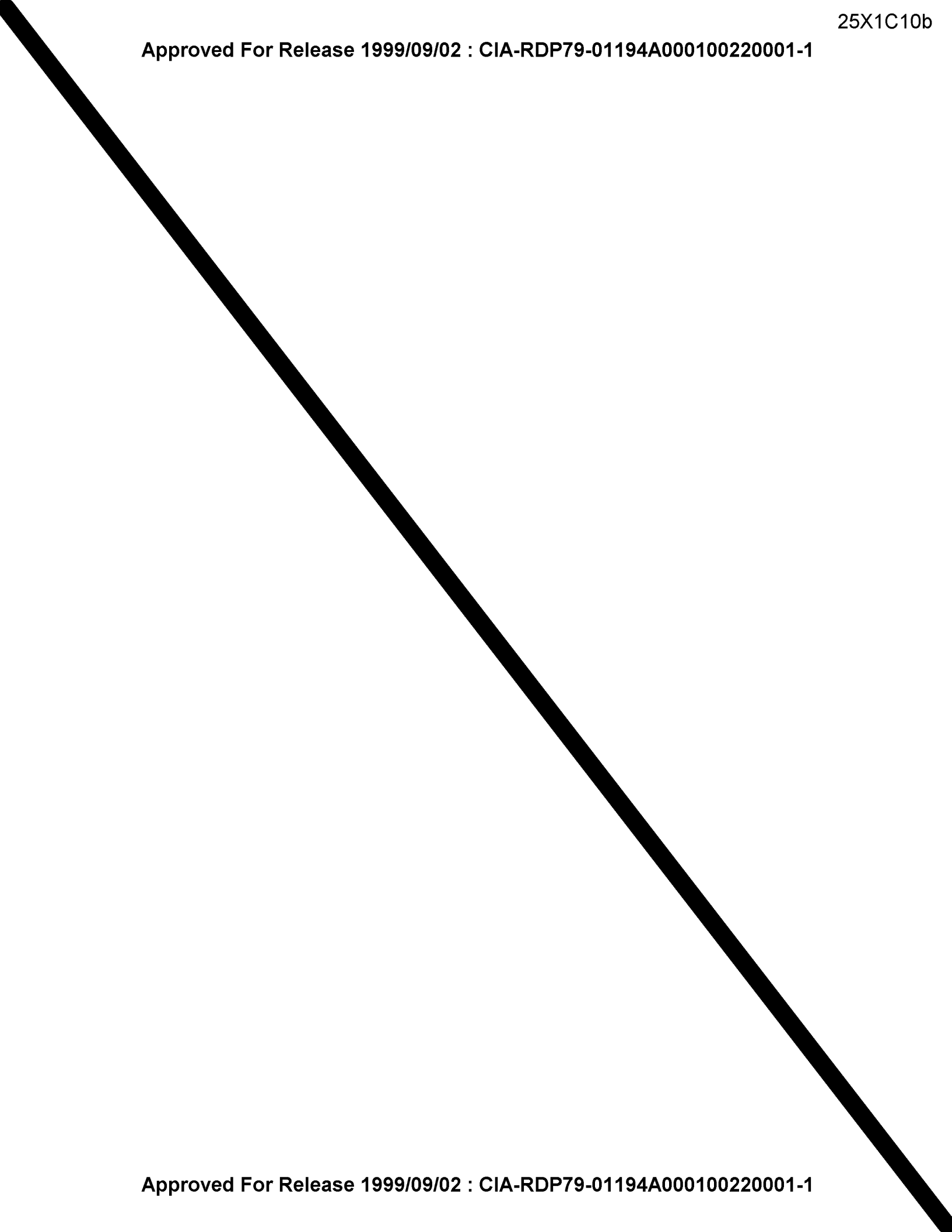

Approved For Release 1999/09/02 : CIA-RDP79-01194A000100220001-1

# The Brezhnev Era



## The Man and the System

By Jerry F. Hough

As of March 1976, Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev has been General Secretary (or First Secretary) of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for nearly eleven and a half years. Thus, he has been party leader twice as long as Vladimir Lenin, and if he remains in the job until July, his tenure in office will have exceeded that of Nikita Khrushchev. (Formally, indeed, he has already been party leader longer than Khrushchev, for the latter did not receive the title of First Secretary until September 1953.) To put things another way, nearly one-fifth of the Soviet experience has taken place under Brezhnev's stewardship.

With the completion of the 25th Party Congress, with Brezhnev's imminent replacement of Khrushchev as the man with second-longest service as party leader in the history of the Soviet Union (next to Josef Stalin), with age and health problems suggesting that he may not be General Secretary at the 26th Congress in 1981, it is perhaps a convenient time to look back over the Brezhnev era to try to see what he has attempted to accomplish (or at least what has been accomplished during his period of leadership), and to try to speculate about the consequences of his rule for the long-term development of the Soviet political system.

*Mr. Hough is Professor of Political Science at Duke University (Durham, N.C.) and author of* Soviet Prefects: The Local Party Organs in Industrial Decision-Making, *1969, as well as of numerous articles on Soviet politics. At present, he is preparing a revised edition of* How Russia Is Ruled, *originally written by the late Merle Fainsod.*

### Brezhnev's Political Role

The first problem in the analysis of the Brezhnev era is to decide whether or not it actually has been the Brezhnev era. Whatever one wants to say about the power exercised by Lenin, Stalin, or Khrushchev at any particular date, each of these men unquestionably put his personal stamp on the political system and the policies of his time. Even if these former leaders may occasionally have suffered defeats, they still dominated the political process, and many of the key policy initiatives of the time are identified closely with them. The whole tone of the last decade, however, has been quite different.

In many respects, of course, Brezhnev too has clearly been the dominant official in "his" period. To be sure, in the first months after the removal of Khrushchev, Brezhnev's public profile was a relatively low one—a real effort seems to have been made to keep his status on a somewhat comparable level with that of the other top party leaders. Alexey Kosygin participated in all important foreign policy negotiations and even handled some independently of Brezhnev. When medals were given to the major hero-cities of World War II in the summer of 1965 as part of the new regime's reemphasis of that war's victory, Brezhnev went to Leningrad, while Kosygin awarded the medal to Volgograd and Mikhail Suslov the one to Odessa.[1]

In the summer and fall of 1965, however, the situation seems to have undergone fundamental alteration. Between April and December 1965, one-half of the Central Committee's department heads

were changed. That Brezhnev had a major hand in these changes is suggested by the fact that the replacements in such key units as the Science and Education Department, the General Department (which distributes communications to the Central Committee and is also apparently in charge of security matters[2]), and the Business Office (*upravleniye delami)* were former associates of the First Secretary while he was in Dnepropetrovsk or Moldavia. Then in December, Nikolay Podgornyy was ousted from his position in the Central Committee Secretariat and transferred to the chairmanship of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. At the same time, the Party-State Control Committee was abolished, depriving Aleksandr Shelepin of what seemed to be his main base of power.

Most of the traditional indicators of political preeminence suggested that Brezhnev's position continued to strengthen over the next decade. His former second secretary in Zaporozh'ye, Aleksey Kirilenko, moved into the crucial Organizational Secretary slot; a longtime subordinate in both Dnepropetrovsk and Moldavia, N. A. Shchëlokov, took over as the USSR Minister of Internal Affairs; and three former Dnepropetrovsk and Moldavia officials became deputy chairmen of the KGB. Other men said to be Brezhnev supporters also fared well. At the same time, his reported enemies slipped into minor posts or into retirement. In one case that was widely discussed on the Moscow rumor network, N. G. Yegorychev, the First Secretary of the Moscow Gorkom and a former subordinate of Shelepin while in Komsomol work, was removed from his post almost immediately after reportedly attacking Brezhnev's Middle East policy in 1967.[3]

The various symbolic indicators of the Soviet political system likewise seemed to point to a steady rise in Brezhnev's strength. In February 1966, he received the title of General Secretary, and over time Soviet officials increasingly spoke of "the Politburo headed by Brezhnev." As the Politburo member whose name came first in alphabetical order, his name naturally appeared first in the listing of Politburo members from the very beginning, but when Yu. V. Andropov was added to the Politburo in 1973, Brezhnev's name remained in first place, with the names of the other members given in alphabetical order. In 1970 and 1975, Brezhnev alone signed the published drafts of the new five-year plans (quite an inappropriate step in protocol terms), and by 1975 his statements were liberally quoted in newspapers, and even in scholarly books. His pictures (with quotations attached) abounded on billboards in Moscow.

The 25th Party Congress afforded a number of Politburo and Central Committee members the opportunity to raise the encomiums of Brezhnev to a new level—one superior both in quantity and quality to that accorded Khrushchev at the 22nd Party Congress in 1961.[4] The speakers called the General Secretary an "outstanding fighter for peace and communism," "a tireless champion of peace and real social justice," or the like, and they praised his rather unremarkable and businesslike report inordinately (*e.g.*, as "a contribution to the treasure house of Marxism-Leninism"). V. V. Shcherbitskiy referred to him as the "universally-accepted leader [*obshchepriznannyy lider*] of our party," while Sh. R. Rashidov labeled him "the most [*samyy*] outstanding and most [*samyy*] influential political figure of contemporary times." One Central Committee member remarked upon his "exceptionally great international authority," and another asserted that "all accomplishments—both inside the country and in the international arena—are indissolubly linked with his name." In the words of the First Secretary of the Lithuanian CP, Brezhnev is "a man with a great soul in whom is embodied all the best qualities of Man in capital letters."

Yet, in a number of respects, the succession after Khrushchev's removal differed strikingly from those which had followed Lenin's and Stalin's deaths. Within seven years of Lenin's death, all but one of the voting members of the 1923 Politburo had been ousted in disgrace, and essentially within the same length of time after Stalin's death all but two of the 1953 voting Presidium members had suffered the same fate. The turnover within the Central Committee was not quite so great. Nevertheless, 69 percent of that body's voting members elected in 1930 had not occupied this position in 1923, and 77 percent of the voting members elected in 1961 had not yet achieved this status in 1953.

By comparison, the post-Khrushchev leadership has been surprisingly stable—especially given its age. In the months after Khrushchev's fall, four men emerged as the dominant figures within the leadership—Brezhnev, Kosygin, Podgornyy, and Suslov. (Characteristically, when the results of the election of Politburo members were announced to the 23rd Congress in 1966, the names of these four men, the stenographic report of the Congress indicates, were greeted by "prolonged and stormy applause," while the other names received only "applause."[5]) A decade later, these four—now joined by Kirilenko—are still part of a clearly-defined inner bureau within the Politburo, although all will be at least 70 years of age in 1976. There have been removals from the Politburo, but except for

the aging Mikoyan (who retired in late 1965), the men involved have been relatively junior members—Dmitriy Polyanskiy, who had become a voting Presidium member in 1960; Gennadiy Voronov, who had achieved this status in 1961; and Aleksandr Shelepin and Pëtr Shelest, who had been named full members only in November 1964 after Khrushchev's removal. As late as 1975, one scholar could express his opinion that Brezhnev still had not gained his own majority on the Politburo,[6] and there certainly is no way to demonstrate the incorrectness of this position on the basis of the pattern of changes in Politburo membership.

Turnover has also been quite low among voting members of the Central Committee. Sixty-one percent of the voting members elected to the Central Committee in 1961 and still alive in 1971 were reelected to the Central Committee in the latter year, and the figure would be higher if Khrushchev and his closest associates were excluded. (Eighty-one percent of the living full members of the 1966 Central Committee retained their membership in 1971.) An expansion of the Central Committee both in 1966 and 1971, as well as the death of a number of old members, permitted the election of a larger number of new members than the removal rates would suggest, but the proportion of 1971 voting members who had not enjoyed this status seven years earlier under Khrushchev (55 percent) was still considerably lower than the comparable figures in 1930 and 1961.

Despite the aging of the Central Committee implied in this state of affairs, the pattern of stability was, if anything, more pronounced in the five years leading up to 25th Party Congress. An incredible 89 percent of the living full members of the 1971 Central Committee were reelected in 1976, and 59 percent of the 86 newly-elected full members had been candidate members of the Central Committee or members of the Auditing Commission since at least 1971.[7] As a result, the average age of the voting members of the Central Committee (excluding worker and peasant members) rose to 60 in 1976 as compared with 52 in 1961, and even the voting members newly elected averaged 55 years of age.[8] Twenty-eight percent of the voting members will have passed their 65th birthday by the end of 1976. In this respect at least, the Soviet leadership seems intent on following the Chinese model of socialism.

Not only did Brezhnev fail to follow the lead of Stalin and Khrushchev in ousting first his old equals on the Politburo and then the Central Committee members who had put him in power, but he also has not put any unmistakable personal stamp on the policy of the last decade. It is true that at least since the 24th Congress in 1971 the General Secretary has been extremely prominent in foreign policy, personally conducting key negotiations on SALT [illegible] the Helsinki Conference. Despite the symbolism involved, however, these negotiations, as well as the public espousal of the policy of *razryadka* (relaxation), have entailed far fewer changes in actual policy than were evident in the first post-Khrushchev years when Kosygin was the major Soviet spokesman in relations with the non-Communist world (as discussed later).[9]

In domestic policy, Brezhnev has, as befits an old *zemleustroitel'* (specialist in land rationalization and utilization), pushed a vigorous land reclamation program with much more than incremental budgetary increases and has been associated with a policy of specialization of land use within the kolkhoz (collective farm) sector.[10] However, there has been little drama in these undertakings, and the more visible reform of industrial management was identified with Kosygin. To top things off, nowhere in the domestic sphere (including the economic reform) can one point to dramatic policy changes or to the type of frontal challenge to major power centers of the type that were so noticeable in the years prior to Khrushchev's ouster.

Indeed, the lack of drama in Soviet policy has at times taken on the appearance of real sluggishness. The replacement of the bureaucratic main administrations (*glavki*) of the industrial ministries by groupings of enterprises called "associations" (*ob"yedineniya*) has gone much slower than early decisions indicated it would, and various experiments that have been conducted (*e.g.*, the creation of an agricultural administrative system in Moldavia based on "kolkhoz councils" [11]) seem neither to have been repudiated or to have been carried through to completion.

In addition, high-level personnel vacancies have been filled with incredible slowness. The chairmanships of the People's Control Committee and the State Committee for Prices remained open for 13 months, the presidency of the Academy of Sciences for six months, and the post of ideological secretary of the Party Central Committee for 15 months. At this writing, the chairmanship of the All-Union Trade Union Council has not been filled for 10 months, and that of the State Committee for Labor and Wages for 21 months.

There is, therefore, an anomaly in the evidence about Brezhnev's role in the last decade. On the one hand, his early political maneuvers had all the appearances of classic and successful steps in a consolidation of power, and all the prestige indicators of subsequent years suggest that he has become undisputed leader. On the other hand, if his position actually has been a dominant one, Brezhnev clearly has not used his power to push through dramatic policy changes or to shake up the administrative-political system. On the whole, the policy outcomes of the last decade are those that one might well have predicted would emerge from bargaining among [illegible] in committee

politics—and at times the results have even hinted at the possibility of temporary deadlock.

What are we to conclude about this anomaly? At the present time, the evidence cannot be definitive, but it should be noted that the speeches at the 25th Party Congress suggest one possible answer—namely, that Brezhnev has been in an extremely strong position, but that he has deliberately chosen to delegate a great deal of authority to subordinates. The implication of these speeches emerges more clearly if one examines them after rereading the stenographic report of the 22nd Party Congress in 1961.[12] One is struck by the relative honesty of the comments made by the delegates at that Congress about Khrushchev. Almost no one spoke of the First Secretary with real affection, and the words of praise stressed his "tireless energy," "revolutionary fervor," "daring," "decisiveness," his "principled" and "demanding" nature, and so forth. The words *"smelyy* [bold]" and *"smelost'* [boldness]" appeared with particular frequency.

The tone of the speeches at the 25th Congress was quite different. To be sure, the speakers may have felt that, despite repeated references to Brezhnev's "tireless" and "inexhaustible" energy, this was Brezhnev's last congress, and that a warm farewell was especially appropriate. Whatever the reason, however, warmth and even affection were there. Brezhnev was credited with initiating many actions, and, like Khrushchev, he was repeatedly called a "true Leninist," a "staunch fighter for peace and communism," etc. But the strongest emphasis was placed upon such personal qualities as "deep humanity, consideration, and attentiveness to people," as well as his modesty.

In particular, it was often said that Brezhnev has "established comradeliness, trust, and a respectful relation to people in the party"; he has created "a good atmosphere for work," a situation in which people can "breathe easily, work well, and live peacefully"; he has "an ability to establish an atmosphere of trust, respect, and dedication to standards among people" and "to coordinate [*nalazhivat'*] strong and friendly common work by a large number of people"; under his leadership, "the Central Committee consistently raises the role of the local party organs, widely consults with them, attentively examines initiatives and proposals from the localities." As the First Secretary of the Georgian CP, E. A. Shevardnadze, summarized this theme, "one of Leonid Il'ich's best qualities is that he does not clothe himself in the mantle of a superman, that he does not try to do everyone's thinking and working."[13]

In short, the top officials of the party do not convey the impression in their speeches that Brezhnev is engaged in some struggle against the bonds of oligarchical control. Rather, they look upon him as "the universally-recognized leader" who has turned out to be a wonderful man to work for—a fact for which they are enormously grateful (especially given their memories of his predecessor). One could dismiss these quotations as meaningless flattery. But party officials presumably have some choice in how to flatter, and their flattery of Khrushchev, to repeat, was very different in substance—and reasonably accurate in communicating a true sense of their characterization of him.

On other grounds, too, it seems to this observer that Brezhnev must be relatively happy—perhaps completely happy—with the role he plays in the policy process. Struggles for power, in the narrowest sense of that phrase, involve so many inherent elements of instability that a ten-year period in which a *kto-kogo* conflict is unresolved is extremely hard to imagine. The long delays in some personnel decisions could have resulted from a combination of Brezhnev's growing weariness of administrative detail and the need to obtain his approval for any actions to be taken, rather than from political deadlocks. Similarly, the explanation for the lack of turnover may well be that Brezhnev is more comfortable with old colleagues and—perhaps most likely of all—has not wanted to replace them with younger men who might have the aspirations of potential successors.[14]

## Brezhnev's Actions and Policies

If the last decade has indeed been a Brezhnev era, how ought we to characterize it? What has the General Secretary attempted to accomplish, and what has he in fact succeeded in accomplishing?

The instinctive way to answer such questions when they are posed about the Soviet Union is to try to ascertain (or to speculate about) the basic changes that the leader has attempted to introduce into the Soviet system—or perhaps the basic changes that he has been blocking. "Transitional figure," "transformation," "ossification," "rationalizer," and "bureaucratic counterrevolution" are the kind of words and phrases used in this type of analysis. In such a framework, a "liberal" becomes defined as a man who strives to move the system in the direction of a constitutional democracy or market socialism, not one who promotes egalitarian social welfare policies.

While the author of this article will not be able to resist speculation about systemic change in the Soviet Union, he believes that at the outset we should recognize that the approach just described is quite foreign to that which we employ in our analysis of Western leaders. We take for granted that very few leaders seek to alter the political system in a fundamental way—except, perhaps, in

response to some major crisis. Indeed, we often attribute no higher policy goal to a leader than the desire to be reelected. Moreover, we say that when leaders (particularly American Presidents) develop serious policy interests, it is often international relations that comes to absorb them—partly because they do not want to get embroiled in bruising conflicts in the domestic sphere.

It may well be that we would understand Brezhnev better if we interpreted him in these Western-like terms rather than focusing on his relationship (pro or con) to fundamental changes in the political and economic systems. The First Secretary of Dnepropetrovsk Obkom asserted at the 25th Party Congress that the General Secretary has earned "universal love, gratitude, and deep respect," [15] and perhaps Brezhnev has really not sought a great deal more. Without doubt, most world leaders would be overjoyed at such a statement about themselves after they had been in office a decade even if it were only a half-truth, and they might well consider the development of such a set of attitudes a major goal to pursue. Khrushchev's fate serves as a reminder that a General Secretary holds his post only so long as the Central Committee is willing to support him against challenge and, further, that the price of failure can be virtual house arrest and expungement from the history books. Only a fool would fail to be concerned about a similar fate.

If one looks at Brezhnev's actions and policies in the light of the hypothetical requirements of "electoral" politics, it is indeed striking how many of them can be explained in those terms. For example, it can be argued that by allowing the specialized state-party-scientific complexes some autonomy in deciding policy questions within their fields of competency and by giving nearly all the complexes an incremental budgetary increase each year, Brezhnev has sought to avoid the type of anger that Khrushchev's "voluntarist" and "subjective" interventions clearly provoked among some Central Committee members. Similarly, it can be contended that by guaranteeing Central Committee members a high probability of job security, he has given these officials a good reason to wonder whether a change of leadership would be in their own personal interest, while by expanding the size of the voting membership of the Central Committee by 64 percent over the last decade, he has afforded himself the opportunity to create a group within the body who are beholden to him for their promotions.

In addition, of course, those officials chosen for entry into the expanding Central Committee have often had reason to be grateful to the Brezhnev leadership for policy reasons as well as personal ones. It surely was not accidental that the reunification of the industrial ministries took place before, rather than after, the 23rd Congress in 1966, for this action meant the creation of a number of highly-delighted new candidates for Central Committee membership. Similiarly, it scarcely seems fortuitous that the regime launched a major new investment program in the non-black-earth regions of the RSFSR in 1974 (at the personal initiative of Brezhnev, it was said at the 25th Party Congress) and that the 29 oblasts benefiting from this program provided 12 (really 13) first secretaries who were promoted to full membership in the Central Committee in 1976 for the first time in conjunction with its expansion.[16] Perhaps these promotions are just the result of the increased importance of the posts in question, but one can hardly ignore the possibility that Brezhnev is tailoring his policies and his co-optations into the Central Committee in such a way as to maximize his support.

A second possible key to an understanding of Brezhnev is that he may have become as fascinated with foreign policy as many American Presidents have. In the realm of external affairs, a leader serves as the symbol of the nation, and history's judgment of the "greatness" of Presidents and "Tsars" ultimately seems to rest overwhelmingly on the degree of success of their foreign policies. (This is surely one reason that so many Russians have real difficulties with an all-out attack on Stalin.) Moreover, in the conduct of international relations, a leader usually has more autonomy, less need to antagonize powerful institutional interests (at least if he is careful in his handling of the military), and—by no means least—a chance to meet and negotiate with the great of the world.

The enormous attention Brezhnev has given to foreign visitors and travel abroad in recent years suggests that he, too, has felt the attraction of foreign policy. If one assumes that he operates on a five-day workweek and a month's vacation each year (which he almost always takes in late December and early January, invariably leading the Western press to speculate that he is medically or politically ill), then 100 days of contact with foreigners in Moscow or abroad constitute 41 percent of the available working days in a year—even if one excludes from the calculation the time he must also spend on foreign policy briefings and decision-making. Some contacts can be brief and permit time for a full workday on other subjects, but Brezhnev has tended to get involved in very long discussions with many of his visitors. Hence, it may be no coincidence that the period during which major vacancies began to remain unfilled and during which criticisms of economic performance at the December plenary sessions of the Central Committee were not followed by decisive action was precisely the period that Brezhnev became increasingly active in foreign policy negotiations with the non-Communist world.

Of course, no political leader is interested solely in personal survival or in foreign relations. Inevitably, his name gets associated with a set of con-

crete policies even if he serves as no more than a broker mediating proposals advanced by others, and Brezhnev is no exception. However, there has been such an incredible misunderstanding in the West about the nature of policy in the Brezhnev era that it is really best to begin with negatives—to state what policy has not been. The Brezhnev period has *not* been a period of growing repression of individual freedom; it has *not* been a period of declining citizen participation; it has *not* been a period of greater privileges accorded to the "New Class" in comparison with other strata of society; it has *not* been a period of neglect of the consumer; it has *not* been a period of recentralization of the Soviet political system. On the contrary, the trend in policy has been in the opposite direction in these areas. Indeed, the policies of the last decade in each of these areas have represented a continuation of those of the Khrushchev era. In this respect, then, the Brezhnev era has in fact been (to use the phrase of the mid-1960's) "Khrushchevism without Khrushchev."

The basic direction of policy on the questions mentioned in the last paragraph has been so clear that it should be a source of great wonderment that so many Westerners writing about the Soviet Union consider the statements of the last paragraph controversial or even incorrect. Perhaps the problem has been that many Westerners have come to identify so much with dissidents in the Soviet Union that they have judged the current regime by the standard of the hopes and rhetoric of the Khrushchev period rather than of its reality. Perhaps journalists, as Adam Ulam suggests, have grown frustrated because they cannot collect "news" as it is understood in the West—"constant streams of revealing and often scandalous goings-on in high circles, spectacular crimes, and social disturbances"—and have let this frustration affect their judgment.[17] Perhaps, also, too few scholars have been conducting primary research on the Brezhnev period and have been relying on the journalists' reports or their own sense of the style of the present leadership.

Most probably, however, the problem in our understanding of the Brezhnev era has been confusion about the phenomenon of "conservatism." In style and rhetoric, Brezhnev and his associates have been much more "conservative" than Khrushchev. The new regime has likewise been much more "conservative" in the way that it tackles problems. No longer is policy implementation characterized by a succession of rather wild campaigns, and no longer is the governmental and party machinery subjected to drastic reorganization almost yearly. Moreover, as will be discussed later, the new leadership is also more "conservative" with respect to challenging the professional judgments of the various specialized establishments in the country.

In the foreign policy realm, the term "conservative" both can and does denote a real change in policy. Early in the Brezhnev era, the Khrushchev predilection for crises and for confrontations and near-ultimatums (as over Berlin) gave way to a tendency to mute conflicts and even to settle them in some cases. Soviet mediation of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 indicated not a desire for conflict for its own sake, but quite the opposite. Yet except for the way in which conflicts have been handled (which in the foreign policy realm is, to be sure, a difference of substance), *razryadka* has had many elements in common with Khrushchev's "peaceful coexistence." In negotiating SALT agreements, the Soviet leadership has been no more willing than the American leadership to seek accords that would really cut back on what its military has wanted; in conducting policy in the Third World and even in Europe, the Soviet leaders have shown no more inclination than the American leaders to renounce support for those forces likely to be friendly to their side in the future; even in dealing with the other great superpower, the Soviet Union (maybe not Brezhnev himself) has been no more willing to control its enthusiasm for the encouragement of Angela Davis and other "progressive" elements in America than the United States (maybe not the President and Secretary of State personally) has been able to do with respect to the Soviet Union's dissidents and Jews. Brezhnev may have proclaimed the end of the cold war, but both sides continue the essence of the "competitive peace" policies that have marked their relationship in the past.

Yet, the word "conservative" can be highly misleading, especially in the realm of domestic policy. Certainly "conservative" in the sense of "cautious" does not necessarily mean "conservative" on freedom-of-speech or social-welfare issues. In the former sphere, the continuation of restrictions on dissent should not blind us to the fact that dissenters have been treated with considerably more gingerliness than they were in the Khrushchev era. (Our increased exposure to the dissenters has been one of the clearest indicators of this phenomenon. Paradoxically, however, we have interpreted the beginning of the visibility of dissent and its repression as the beginning of repression itself.) The variety of statements that can pass the censors into published works is greater than prior to 1964, and the debates are fuller and more wide-ranging. Even Soviet historians writing about the postrevolutionary period—persons widely thought to have suffered the greatest restriction during the Brezhnev period[18]—have generally been able to publish richer, more solid, and more objective work than had been the case earlier. . .

## Implications

If the phrase "Khrushchevism without Khrushchev" were a completely accurate characterization of the Soviet policies of the last decade, of course, there would have been little reason to overthrow Khrushchev, and Khrushchev was, after all, overthrown. We cannot forget that there have been differences between the Khrushchev and the Brezhnev regimes—differences reflecting greater conservatism in rhetoric and style, greater unwillingness to make drastic policy changes, and much lower rates of turnover among top personnel. Naturally, the term "conservative" is used only in foreign discussions of the current leadership; however, the Soviet press itself recognizes and hails the change with its repeated emphasis upon a "scientific" approach to decision-making.

Marxism-Leninism has always laid claim to being a science, but in the past there was a strong tendency to focus upon the "scientific discoveries" made by the founders. (In the words of Engels, uttered at Marx's grave, "just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history." [31]) The consequence of this focus was to give—or to try to give—peculiar scientific authority to the few who designated themselves the true interpreters of Marx and Lenin. This traditional use of "scientific" has not disappeared from the scene, but in the last decade the word has increasingly assumed a different meaning in political discourse: the making of decisions through a balanced weighing of facts and evidence rather than on the basis of the *a priori* values and insights of the decision-maker (regardless of the source of these values). According to Soviet commentary, the essence of a Leninist style of party work is a "strictly scientific approach to the solution of problems that arise," and this approach is defined as "an all-sided deep analysis and careful taking into account of objective processes and phenomena of social-economic life and their interconnections and interrelationships, a realistic evaluation of existing possibilities." [32]

The crucial questions about the evolution of the Soviet political system during the Brezhnev era revolve around the issue of whether or not change in the pattern of decision-making and the change in the meaning of "scientific decision-making" are permanent in character. It is quite possible that the current style of decision-making simply reflects Brezhnev's preferences or the values of the present oligarchy, and that the next General Secretary will behave differently. (The most striking fact about the Soviet political system is that in nearly 60 years of existence it has had four leaders—whereas the United States has had 11 Presidents in the same period—and that all four have been associated with drastically different "political systems.") It is also quite possible that the discussion of "scientific decision-making" is little more than an "ideology" in Karl Mannheim's sense of the word—a doctrine that has consciously or unconsciously been developed to forestall attacks upon the status quo and the policies emanating from the current leadership.[33]

However, the possibility should at least be considered that a more basic change in the system has occurred—or, perhaps, that a conscious attempt is being made to introduce such a change. The Soviet leadership today looks upon the men who led the Soviet regime during 40 of its first 47 years as so flawed that their names can hardly be mentioned in print in mass journals, and important figures within the Soviet elite certainly must be concerned about this fact. Someone—surely including top-level officials of the type that are likely to be removed if large-scale personnel changes are instituted—must have been thinking about the need to "constitutionalize" the Soviet system in some sense of that term. It is at least possible that the changes in the patterns of policymaking are the result of an effort of this sort—perhaps by Brezhnev himself, perhaps by others.

The degree of individual freedom to be permitted within a system of institutional pluralism is a problem with which the party leadership has been uneasily grappling. Clearly, it feels that advocacy of incremental change in policy should be permitted on most questions if phrased carefully, but that such advocacy should not be accompanied by the type of confrontation politics, dramatization of demands, and public criticism of the leadership found in the West—let alone by negative moralizing about the system as a whole or about the past. There also seems to be a growing sense of the need for some rule of law, at least in the sense of a guarantee against punishment for dissent that is applied without warning. Such innovations as the introduction of some possibility for emigration, the liberalization of the divorce laws,[36] and the relaxation of Khrushchev's overt pressure on religion suggest a lessening of the determination to interfere in people's private lives and to throttle all iconoclasm.

If important Soviet leaders (maybe even Brezhnev) have been trying to institute and perpetuate such a system—in effect, to establish constitutional norms that would prevent a future leader from returning to the "voluntarism" of Stalin and Khrushchev—then a very fundamental change has occurred in the Soviet political system. However, before accepting such a conclusion, we need to ask ourselves a number of questions—questions that must be faced in any case, regardless of the cause of the patterns

The first set of questions centers on the desirability of delegating decision-making power to specialists. Those aspects of Marxism which suggest that ideas and philosophies are shaped by basic economic interests (a notion that in modified form has become an inherent part of Western sociology of knowledge) have been slow to penetrate into the way that Soviet officials and intellectuals think about their own country. In particular, in the new fascination with "science" many—even including Soviet scholars of state and law with whom this author has spoken—fail to recognize that specialists have interests and that their judgment may be affected by those interests.

While many Western political scientists have been very favorably disposed toward "whirlpool" decision-making in Western polities, others have been much concerned that it leads to subordination of the public interest to the interest of the specialized forces making the decision. One would think that such dangers would be particularly great in the Soviet Union, where the partial discipline of market forces is largely absent. And when one reads of a doctor-dominated Soviet public health system producing an unchecked expansion in the number of hospital beds and using a number of devices to keep them filled, when one sees a transportation "whirlpool" whose top officials are almost all railroad men and whose decisions are weighted against highways and truck transportation, one suspects that the danger is not an imaginary one. (Obviously, the same analysis could be made of Soviet defense policy.)

The second set of questions to be faced about the recent pattern of decision-making is its stability. As the experience of Great Britain and many other parliamentary democracies demonstrates, constitutional norms are largely psychological restraints felt by the elite, and they need not rest on institutional checks and balances. (Indeed, even in the United States, the psychological restraints are probably more important than the institutional ones.) Consequently, it would be wrong to assume that such restraints cannot develop within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, especially since some are almost surely developing—*e.g.*, one against the execution of political opponents within the party.

Nevertheless, the fact that the movement toward more "scientific decision-making" has been associated with such an abnormally low level of turnover among the Central Committee members must lead to real questions about its durability. In institutional terms, the Soviet system is unique in that the system's "parliament" (the Party Central Committee), which has the responsibility for selecting and controlling the leader, is in turn composed of officials who, directly or indirectly, are responsible to the leader in their daily work. The problem created by such an arrangement is serious indeed. If the leader can freely replace top subordinates in an effort to maintain administrative efficiency and dynamism, how can the subordinates effectively control him? If the subordinates' position on the Central Committee is secure, how can the leader maintain administrative efficiency? One can imagine ways in which this problem might be solved, but the personnel policy of the last decade provides little assurance that it has been.

This article has basically accepted the proposition that Brezhnev's position over the years has been a dominant one and that he himself has provided the job security enjoyed by most Central Committee members; however, if such a policy has been forced on the General Secretary, the fundamental dilemma of the system obviously remains unresolved. In such a case, there would be a real possibility that the system is moving toward a state of inflexibility and sluggishness that courts the possibility of explosion. Earlier Western talk about an immobilized system made little sense when the sub-Politburo administrative elite was in its mid-50's and had largely risen to the top fairly recently; in fact, there has been no immobilism in such areas as social policy. But by the time of the projected 26th Party Congress in 1981, members of the present Central Committee will average 65 years of age, and if most are still in high positions, the administrative elite by any comparative standard will be extraordinarily old.

Furthermore, even if the basic argument of this article is correct and it has been Brezhnev himself who has chosen to refrain from replacing most members of the Central Committee, there is still little reason to suggest that the institutional dilemma of limiting the General Secretary has been solved. Indeed, if Brezhnev remains General Secretary for a considerable period of time and does not change his personnel policy, then the dangers of ossification may be at their greatest. If he dies, retires, or is removed in the near future, then the argument for a policy of massive replacement of the aging elite will become a strong one (and appeals for a demanding attitude toward personnel did receive applause at the 25th Party Congress). However, the difficulty of effecting such a "renewal" without giving someone an opportunity to create a powerful machine and free himself from collective restraints is enormous.

In the past, Western specialists on the Soviet Union often talked of succession crises, but such a crisis has never occurred in any meaningful sense of the word. Changes in leadership have taken place in an orderly fashion through established procedures. In the past, however, there was always a logical successor (or successors) and a political-administrative situation conducive to a relatively smooth transition.

Today, instead of talking about unanimity within the leadership and the inevitability of "Brezhnevism without Brezhnev" after his departure, we should

at least consider the possibility that the succession to him may in fact involve a genuine crisis—if not immediately after his departure, then within a few years. If Brezhnev has been following an "after me, the deluge" line instead of trying to guarantee his policies after he has gone (a distinct possibility in this observer's opinion), some type of deluge cannot be ruled out.

In fact, the coming succession seems fraught with an unusually large combination of problems. There is no Politburo member with the "right" set of experiences and age to be General Secretary; there is a major problem of controlling a successor who has every excuse to rejuvenate the political-administrative elite; there is the possibility that the elections to the Politburo and Central Committee in the last few years may have created a real cleavage between these two bodies on such questions as investment priorities.[38] If the singling out of Suslov as the second secretary in the listing of secretaries elected after the recent Congress implies that he is now the designated emergency or interim successor (as it quite conceivably could), then one would have a very old General Secretary (Suslov is now 73) who probably has not had the opportunity to build the type of organizational support that Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev did and that Kirilenko presumably enjoys.

Particularly if the succession is accompanied by an unexpected crisis event—and such events inevitably occur in all countries periodically and always seem to be unexpected—the degree to which "scientific decision-making" has been constitutionalized in the Soviet Union will be very seriously tested, and elements in the leadership may be driven to major institutional change (*e.g.*, at a minimum, limitation of the General Secretary to one five-year term in office) in an attempt to solve the inistitutional dilemmas of the system.